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RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE IMMEDIATE  
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL IMMEDIATE 5317  
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU IMMEDIATE 6489  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI IMMEDIATE 8448  
RUEHNT/AMEMBASSY TASHKENT IMMEDIATE 1236  
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL CALCUTTA IMMEDIATE 0780  
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RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE IMMEDIATE 8804  
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SUBJECT: PAKISTANI COMMENTS ON UPCOMING SIACHEN-SIR CREEK  
TALKS

REF: NEW DELHI 3466

¶1. (U) Summary. The Pakistani press has cast reports on the upcoming Composite Dialogue talks on Siachen glacier (May 23-24) and Sir Creek (May 25-26) in a lackluster light, mostly by lifting bylines from the Indian press. There has been little discussion on what proposals the GOP will bring forth, but much analysis of a perceived divide between the Indian military and Indian PM Manmohan Singh. Pakistani think-tankers expect the GOP to firmly reject India's demand to verify troop positions in Siachen, believing that India will present a compromise solution on Siachen at the talks this week. End summary.

¶2. (U) This week's May 23-26 defense-secretary level talks on Siachen and Sir Creek will be held in New Delhi. The Pakistani delegation will be headed by Defense Secretary Tariq Ghazi. Accompanying him will be Additional Secretary Muhammad Ashraf Chaudhry and MFA India Director Zaheer Janjua. Talks on Sir Creek will be headed by Additional Defense Secretary Ehsan-ul Haq Chaudhry. Though two days are scheduled to discuss Sir Creek, the media's attention has been captured by the possibility of an Indian proposal to demilitarize Siachen.

¶3. (U) The Pakistani English-language press has re-published a variety of Indian articles on the upcoming talks. Recently, coverage has focused on a perceived divide between the Indian military and PM Manmohan Singh, with predictions that this division could stall forward movement on resolving the Siachen dispute. One paper, "Dawn," quotes an unnamed senior GOP official who believes the talks will give final shape to a pact agreed upon by officials from both countries during recent "informal talks." There has been no comment in the press on what stance the GOP delegation will take in New Delhi.

¶4. (SBU) Pakistani experts from three Islamabad think-tanks were overly optimistic about the outcome of the upcoming talks on Siachen. Khalid Mahmud, Institute of Regional Studies, cited recent Indian acquiescence on the Kishenganga dam design as a sign that India realizes that it must

compromise to achieve progress on other, more contentious issues such as Kashmir. He added that the willingness of PM Singh to take on India's military hawks on the Siachen issue shows that the Indian government is determined to hammer out a solid, workable solution soon. All three experts interpret recent grumbling by senior GOP officials on the usefulness of the Composite Dialogue process as a factor pushing the Indians to make concessions. Tanveer Ahmed Khan, Institute of Strategic Studies, believes the outcome of this week's meetings will determine whether PM Singh will visit Islamabad this summer, making it in India's interest to ensure the May 23-26 meetings are positive and produce results. Interestingly, the Pakistani experts were not interested in discussing possible resolution of the Sir Creek boundary; Pervez Iqbal Cheema, Islamabad Policy Research Institute, noted that Sir Creek is of minimal strategic importance and a solution will be easy to formulate as Indo-Pak relations normalize.

15. (SBU) Comment: Pakistani press reports have focused on Indian internal debate over Siachen, with little recognition that public debate and process is a natural element of Indian democracy. Instead, Pakistani observers interpret PM Singh's "struggle" with the Indian military as a signal that India is ready to meet Pakistani demands on Siachen. Post's think-tank contacts were on the mark in relation to Pakistani frustrations with the Composite Dialogue process: even President Musharraf has publicly called for an acceleration of the talks, especially in regard to meetings on sensitive issues such as Kashmir. Poloffs regularly hear similar sentiments expressed by working-level GOP officials, who claim the Composite Dialogue process has only establishes bus

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links instead of tackling the "real issues" of Kashmir, Siachen, and water disputes. End comment.  
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